

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWS  
INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPORTS

LENGTH AND GENERAL FORMAT

Reviews may vary in length depending on the nature, content and length of the article. Generally, one page (typed, double spaced) would be expected. A neatly handwritten report in ink is acceptable, but this should take more space. Write on only one side of a page. At the top of your review, place your name, cite the author, full title, and date.

SOURCES FOR A REPORT

The reading material for reviews can be from various sources that supplement the textbook. In the main, the articles for reviews are in the readings books edited by Peter Woll and Allan Cigler/Burdett Loomis. The teacher may also provide photocopies of pertinent articles.

WHILE YOU READ

Take notes (mental or written) on what impresses you as you read an article. Take note of both favorable and unfavorable impressions. Look for material that confirms or challenges your previously held views or conventional views of politics or history. By the time you finish, you should be asking "What is my reaction to this account?" It would be very trivial to simply think or say "The article is interesting."

PREPARING THE REVIEW

There are three basic functions of a written review: (1) To describe content; (2) To evaluate the article; (3) To offer subjective reflections on the article. A good review is not a recitation of content word for word. Regurgitation of that type requires no special mental skill. The review should be informative, analytical and critical. It is not advisable to separate content from criticism; they should be interwoven.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN A REVIEW

1. What was the author's purpose in preparing the work? How well did the author accomplish this purpose?
2. Is the article convincing? Is it comprehensive? Does it neglect important phases of the topic?
3. Does the author appear biased?
4. What intellectual questions has the author raised in your mind?
5. What seems to be unique aspects of the account?
6. Is the writing style popular or scholarly?
7. Is the article well documented? Are sources primary or secondary?

Only part of this list will likely apply to any particular reading. These are not offered as a checklist to cover in a review, but rather as possible starting points for reflection on what you have read.

FINAL NOTE

You should attempt to be fair in your review. Criticisms should not be made in vague and general statements; they should be grounded in specific evidence from the content of the work. A short quote and/or page notes are often appropriate. Prepare your review to answer well the questions you raise.

